

For the Companion.

A BOARDING SCHOOL FROLIC.

"It was years ago," said my aunt, "and teachers were very much stricter than they are now. The girls at Miss Cotton's were not allowed lights in their rooms after nine o'clock, never went out alone, and were expected to behave like models of propriety from morning till night.

"As you may imagine, ten young girls, full of spirits and fun, found these rules hard to keep, and made up for good behavior in public by all sorts of frolics in private.

"Miss Cotton and her brother sat in the back parlor after school was over, and the young ladies were sent to bed. Mr. John was very deaf, and Miss Sally very near-sighted,—two convenient afflictions for the girls on some occasions, but once they proved quite the reverse, as you shall hear.

"We had been very prim for a week, and our bottled up spirits could no longer be contained, so we planned a revel after our own hearts, and set our wits to work to execute it.

"The first obstacle was surmounted in this way: As none of us could go out alone, we resolved to lower Jenny Price from the window, for she was light, and small, and very smart.

"With our combined pocket money she was to buy nuts and candy, cake and fruit, pie, and a candle, so that we might have a light after Betsey took ours away, as usual.

"We were to darken the window of the inner chamber, set a watch in the little entry, light up, and then for a good time.

"At eight o'clock on the appointed evening several of us professed great weariness, and went to our room, leaving the rest sewing virtuously, with Miss Cotton, who read Hannah More's Sacred Dramas aloud, in a way that fitted the listeners for bed as well as a dose of opium would have done.

"I am sorry to say I was one of the ring-leaders, and as soon as we got up stairs, produced the rope provided for the purpose, and invited Jennie to be lowered. It was an old-fashioned house, sloping down behind, and the closet window chosen by us was not many feet from the ground.

"It was a summer evening, so that at eight o'clock it was still light; but we were not afraid of being seen, for the street was a lonely one and our only neighbors two old ladies, who put down their curtains at sunset and never looked out till morning.

"Jenny had been bribed by promises of as many 'goodies' as she could eat, and being a regular mad-cap, she was ready for any thing."

"Tying the rope round her waist, she crept out and we let her safely down, sent a big basket after her, and saw her slip round the corner in my big sunbonnet and another girl's shawl, so that she should not be recognized.

"Then we put our nightgowns over our dresses and were laid peacefully in bed when Betsey came up, earlier than usual; for it was evident that Miss Cotton felt a little suspicious at our sudden weariness.

"For half an hour we lay laughing and whispering, as we waited for the signal from Jenny. At last we heard a cricket chirp shrilly under the window, and flying up, saw a little figure below in the twilight.

"O quick! quick!" cried Jenny, panting with haste. Draw up the basket and then get me in, for I saw Mr. Cotton in the market, and ran all the way home, so that I might get in before he came."

"Up came the heavy basket, bumping and scraping on the way, and smelling, O so nice! Down went the rope, and with a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether we hoisted poor Jenny half way up to the window, when, sad to tell, the rope slipped and down she fell, only being saved from broken bones by the haycock under the window.

"He's coming! he's coming! O pull me up, for mercy sake!" cried Jenny, scrambling to her feet unhurt, but a good deal shaken.

"We saw a dark figure approaching, and dragged her in with more bumping and scraping, and embraced her with rapture, for we had just escaped being detected by Mr. John, whose eyes were as sharp as his ears were dull.

"We heard the front door shut, then a murmur of voices, and then Betsey's heavy step coming up stairs.

"Under the bed went the basket and Jenny, and into the beds went the conspirators, and nothing could have been more decorous than the appearance of the room when Betsey popped her head in.

"Master's an old fidget to send me travelling up again, just because he fancied he saw something amiss at the window. Nothing but a curtain flapping, or a shadder, for the poor dears is sleeping like lambs."

"We heard her say this to herself, and a general titter agitated the white coverlets as she departed.

"Jenny was in high feather at the success of her exploit, and danced about like an elf, as she put her nightgown on over her frock, braided her hair in funny little tails all over her head, and fastened the great red cushion on her bosom for a breastpin in honor of the feast.

"The other girls went to their rooms, as agreed upon, and all was soon dark and still up stairs, while Miss Cotton began to enjoy herself below, as she always did when 'her young charges' were safely disposed of.

"Then ghosts began to walk, and the mice scuttled back to their holes in alarm, for white figures glided from room to room, till all were assembled in the little chamber.

"The watch was set at the entry door, the signal agreed upon, the candle lighted and the feast spread forth upon a newspaper on the bed, with the coverlet arranged so that it could be whisked over the refreshments at a moment's notice.

"How good every thing was, to be sure! I don't think I've eaten any pies since that had such a delicious flavor as those broken ones, eaten hastily, in that little oven of a room, with Jenny making jokes and the others enjoying stolen sweets with true girlish relish. Of course it was very wicked, but I must tell the truth.

"We were just beginning on the cake when the loud scratching of a rat disturbed us.

"The signal! fly! run! hide! Hush, don't laugh!" cried several voices, and we scuttled into bed as rapidly and noiselessly as possible, with our mouths and hands full.

"A long pause, broken by more scratching, but as no one came, we decided on sending to inquire what it meant. I went, and found Polly, the picket guard, half asleep, and longing for her share of the feast.

"It was a real rat; I've not made a sound. Do go and finish: I'm tired of this," said Polly, slapping away at the mosquitoes.

"Back I hurried with the good news. Every one flew up, briskly. We lighted the candle again and returned to our revel. The refreshments were somewhat injured by Jenny's bouncing in among them, but we didn't care, and soon finished the cake.

"Now let's have the nuts," I said, groping for the paper bag.

"They are almonds and peanuts, so we can crack them with our teeth. Be sure you get the bag by the right end," said Jenny.

"I know what I'm about," and to show her that it was all right I gave the bag a little shake, when out flew the nuts, rattling like a hail storm all over the uncarpeted floor.

"Now you've done it," cried Jenny, as Polly scratched like a mad rat, and a door creaked below, for Miss Cotton was not deaf.

"Such a flurry as we were in! Out went the candle, and each one rushed away with as much of the feast as she could seize in her haste. Jenny dived into her bed, recklessly demolishing the last pie and scattering the candy far and wide.

"Poor Polly was nearly caught, for Miss Cotton was quicker than Betsey, and our guard had to run for her life.

"Our room was the first, and was in good order, though the two flushed faces on the pillows were rather suspicious. Miss Cotton stood staring about her, looking so funny, without her cap, that my bedfellow would have gone off in a fit of laughter, if I had not pinched her warningly.

"Young ladies, what is this unseemly noise?"

"No answer from us but a faint snore. Miss Cotton marched into the next room, put the same question and received the same reply.

"In the third chamber lay Jenny, and we trembled as the old lady went in. Sitting up, we peeped and listened breathlessly.

"Jane, I command you to tell me what this all means?"

"But Jenny only sighed in her sleep and muttered, wickedly, 'Ma, take me home. I'm starved at Cotton's.'"

"Mercy on me! is the child to have a fever?" cried the old lady, who did not observe the tell-tale nuts at her feet.

"So dull, so strict! O take me home!" moaned Jenny, tossing her arms and gurgling, like a naughty little gipsy.

"That last bit of acting upset the whole concern, for as she tossed her arms she showed the big red cushion on her breast. Near-sighted as she was, that ridiculous object could not escape Miss Cotton, neither did the orange that rolled out from the pillow, nor the boots appearing at the foot of the bed.

"With sudden energy the old lady plucked off the cover, and there lay Jenny with her hair dressed a la Topsy, her absurd breast-pin and her dusty boots, among papers of candy, bits of pie and cake, oranges and apples, and a candle upside down burning a hole in the sheet.

"At the sound of Miss Cotton's horrified exclamation Jenny woke up, and began laughing so merrily that none of us could resist following her example, and the rooms rang with merriment for many minutes. I really don't know when we should have stopped if Jenny had not got choked with the nut she had in her mouth, and so frightened us out of our wits."

"What became of the things, and how were you punished?" I asked, as my old aunt paused to laugh like a girl.

"The remains of the feast went to the pig, and we were kept on bread and water for three days."

"Did that cure you?"

"O dear, no; we had half a dozen other frolics that very summer; and although I cannot help laughing at the remembrance of this, you must not think, child, that I approve now of such conduct, or excuse it. No, no, my dear, not I."

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

CHAPTER I.

When Lillian Pope was seventeen years of age, her parents determined to send her to Miss Tasker's celebrated boarding-school, in the ancient and retired town of Haddam, to finish her education. If any reliance could be placed upon Miss Tasker's annual advertisement, no institution could have been selected better fitted to accomplish that desirable end. One could not read it over, without becoming convinced that what was not taught there, it was not worth while for any young lady to know.

In the location of the seminary, also, all moral and sanitary advantages were happily combined. It stood on the brow of a hill which sloped down to Goose Pond in the rear and to the highway in front, the latter, however, being shut off from the grounds by a high board fence, while still further to protect the sacred enclosure from the profane gaze of passers-by, this fence was lined by a thick lilac hedge.

The only buildings within quarter of a mile were the meeting-house and parsonage, and, said Miss Tasker,—

"The minister, thank Heaven, is on the shady side of fifty."

So one spring day, when the lilacs were in blossom, and the robins were building their nests in the tall elm trees, to this safe and pleasant retreat came Lillian Pope, accompanied by her father.

They were ushered into the reception-room, and after a brief delay a rustling of silks was heard, which was followed by the entrance of a middle-aged lady of dignified presence and somewhat majestic proportions.

"Miss Tasker, I presume?" said Mr. Pope, bowing.

"Yes. Happy to see you, sir—Mr. Pope"—glancing at his card, which she still held in her hand. "And this is the young lady of whom we have heard through your letter?"

"My daughter, madam, whom I wish to leave in your charge till she has completed her education—at least so much of it as depends upon a course of study."

"Well added," said Miss Tasker, "for the seminary is but a preparation for that larger school, the world. Be seated, pray. Maria,"—summoning an attendant—"show this young lady to her room—No. 13. You will be more comfortable when you have taken off your wrappings," to Lillian, with a suave smile.

Then these two, the father and preceptress, proceeded to discuss and arrange all necessary preliminaries, which being accomplished, Mr. Pope dropped his voice to a confidential tone, and said:

"There is one little matter I should like to speak to you about before I leave. My daughter is a well-disposed child, and I think has a good mind, but her head has been a little turned by novel-reading. I should be glad if you would keep all such trash out of her hands."

"Our pupils are too busy to find much time for miscellaneous reading," replied Miss Tasker, "and no books are allowed in their hands except such as have been first subjected to our approval; on that point our rules are inviolable."

"Of course, madam, I might have inferred as much from the general character of your institution," said Mr. Pope; "and no doubt you will do all in your power to correct certain romantic tendencies you will perceive in her—to give her mind a practical direction."

"I assure you our pupils have little opportunity for the indulgence of romantic tendencies, and it is the aim of our whole system to fit them for the practical duties of life. Moreover, a constant supervision is exercised over all their affairs such as cannot fail to satisfy the most careful parent."

"Of that I cannot doubt," said Mr. Pope; and as Lillian herself now entered the room, the subject was dropped, and after a respectful farewell of Miss Tasker and an affectionate one of his daughter, Mr. Pope took his leave with a mind at ease.

Perhaps he might have spared himself these revelations of Lillian's character, for much of what he had said Miss Tasker's practised eye had read at a glance. She had not been a preceptress of young ladies twenty years for nothing.

As surely as the geologist can assign to its proper place in his cabinet any new specimen, saying, "This is mica," "This is quartz," "This is felspar," so unerringly could Miss Tasker arrange and classify the human specimens submitted to her inspection.

Had she been asked to give her impression of the specimen now before her in one word, that word would have been, "Lack-a-dai-sical."

It was written on the droop of the slender figure, the poise of the head with its mass of fair hair, the half-closed eyelids, and even the fluttering blue ribbons which made a part of her dress.

On the evening of the same day Miss Tasker held an interview with her assistant, Miss Prince, in her *sanctum sanctorum*.

"Keep a special eye on the young lady who arrived this morning," said she.

"On her?" replied Miss Prince, in a surprised tone. "Certainly, madam. And yet I should sooner have thought of the one who came yesterday."

"That little black-eyed girl, Bettie Potts? There you are mistaken, Miss Prince; there'll be no trouble with her,—that is, no serious trouble. She may think it 'jolly' to give surreptitious feasts in her room; may possibly make a raid on our pickle-jars and preserve-pots for the purpose, but she will never do any thing to bring reproach upon the seminary. She is a matter-of-fact little thing—don't you see?"

"She won't *spell it with an m*, like Mrs. Prindle's Bridget, will she?"

"Excuse me,—I don't comprehend."

"Did I never tell you the story? Well, one evening Bridget had the misfortune to break a large earthen milk-pan which she was washing, and as her mistress needed it immediately to strain the milk in, she sent her out to get another.

"After waiting till Bridget might have gone to the store and back three times, she thought she heard voices outside. She opened the door, and there stood Bridget, leaning over the gate, while one of her numerous cousins, whom Mrs. Prindle recognized as the milk-man, was just skulking round the corner.

"So this is the way you do my errands?" said she, indignantly. 'I send you for a milk-pan, and you bring me home the milk-man instead.'

"An' sure it's a small mistake," said Bridget. 'I only spelt it with an m.'

"And I hope the sequel was that Mrs. Prindle immediately discharged her for her impertinence," said Miss Tasker. "However, it is evident you understand my meaning with regard to Miss Pope."

It will be seen from the foregoing that these two ladies sometimes enjoyed their little jests when by themselves, which I hope will not be set down to their discredit, as many other great dignitaries have been known to be guilty of the same weakness.

"Who is to room with Miss Pope?" asked Miss Prince, when about to retire from the august presence of her superior.

"Has Miss Potts a room-mate?"

"No, madam."

"Put them together in No. 13."

"They are very unlike," ventured Miss Prince, with some hesitation.

"So much the better," said Miss Tasker; "they will counteract each other. We do not put two acids or two alkalis into our bread, but an acid and an alkali."

Several weeks had passed when Lillian was again made the subject of conversation between the two teachers.

"She seems very gentle and yielding," said Miss Prince.

"O, very; but don't trust her out of sight," returned Miss Tasker, dryly.

"I do not doubt your judgment with regard to her," Miss Prince hastened to say; "but still, although I have watched her closely, I have seen

no signs of any thing discreditable as yet. In fact, I must confess I have taken quite a fancy to her."

"I suppose you like that delicate lisp, and that way she has of drawing out 'Yes,' with a circumflex accent, in answer to every remark. I must break her of that. Nothing could be more vulgar."

"She is very affectionate," said Miss Prince.

"Um—kisses you a good deal, doesn't she? How are her recitations?"

"Not more than average," Miss Prince admitted.

"As good as we could expect, with that conformation of the head, probably," said Miss Tasker. "Weak on mathematics, I should say?"

"I must confess that she is. Her quantities are generally unknown, and her roots incapable of extraction," said Miss Prince, with a little attempt at a professional joke.

"I thought as much—*ideality* large, *causality* small," said Miss Tasker.

(To be continued.)

"He could hardly do any less than he did, seeing 'twas he made the mischief," said Bettie, coolly.

"How can you speak so of one who has just perilled his life for our sakes?" said Lillian.

"I don't think his life was in much peril,—or ours either," said Bettie.

"It's very well to say that, now it's all over," said Lillian; "but I should like to know what made you scream and jump so, if you were not scared?"

"I didn't scream; 'twas you who did the screaming. I jumped out to hold Methuselah's head. I should have done it, too, if that youth hadn't rushed out of the woods, and frightened him worse than the gun did."

"You may say what you please, but I shall always regard that young man as the preserver of our lives. Did you notice his eyes?"

"Can't say that I did. Was there any thing remarkable about them? Did he squint?"

"They were a splendid hazel."

"I should say they were a light blue. Yes, now I think of it, they *must* have been blue, to match his carrotty hair."

"Carrotty hair! It was a perfect auburn,—the shade that artists love. And as to his eyes, I'm sure they were hazel. He looked at me in a very expressive manner, when he helped me into the phaeton."

"You don't mean to say that he winked at you, I hope?" laughed Bettie.

To this remark Lillian deigned no reply.

"You needn't put on that injured look," said Bettie. "I was only joking; and I'm sure it makes no difference to us what color the man's eyes were."

"Do you know I think I never saw a girl with so little sentiment as you have?" said Lillian.

"Luckily, you have enough for us both," said Bettie. "But see,—there are checkerberries growing on that bank. You hold Methuselah, and I'll get out and get some. I can appreciate checkerberries, if I can't some other things."

In a few moments she returned, with her hands full of the small red fruit, which so engaged their attention that the subject of contention was dismissed for the time being.

They had ridden perhaps a mile or two, when Bettie said,—

"How very narrow the path has become. I'm afraid we've missed the way."

"What is that light gleaming through the trees?" said Lillian. "It looks like fire."

"It is fire. And see, there are men and horses. It is a gipsy encampment. Let's turn back before they see us."

But it was too late to do this; for already a tall, dark woman, in a broad-brimmed hat and scarlet cloak, stood directly in their path,—the sibyl of the tribe, as appeared from her words.

"Good-evening, pretty ladies," said she. "You have come to have your fortunes told. I see that plainly."

"You've missed it there, grandmother," said Bettie; "for we blundered upon you quite by accident."

"In all the universe, there's no such thing as accident," said the sibyl. "'Twas fate led you to the gipsy's camp, that old Hagar might reveal to you the secrets of the future."

"And can you really foretell future events?" asked Lillian.

"Will the sun rise to-morrow?" was the old woman's answer.

"It can do no harm to try it," said Lillian to Bettie.

"I shall know my fortune when it comes," said Bettie; "and that's soon enough. Come, grandmother, please stand aside, and give me a chance to turn my horse."

"Not till old Hagar has fulfilled her mission," said the gipsy. "I see great things in store for you, pretty ladies; but before I reveal them, it will be necessary to cross your palm with silver."

"Silver? I haven't a dime,—not even a five-cent piece," said Bettie. But Lillian had already drawn her porte-monnaie from her pocket.

"First tell us something that has already happened, that we may know you really have the power," said she, with her fingers on the clasp.

"You belong to the great house up on the hill," said Hagar.

"It wouldn't take a prophet to tell that," said Bettie, laughing. "Try again."

But Lillian, seeing that the old woman's countenance grew dark, gave her a piece of money to avert her anger, and then extended her hand for inspection.

"You have an adorer," said she. "He is waiting for you. You may encounter opposition, but never heed it. Be patient; all will come round right in the end."

"Have I met him?" asked Lillian.

"You have met him, though you may not have

known him. But he *is* you. He watches for you always. O, there's a grand fortune before you,—love, riches, honor, and long life."

"Is that all?" asked Lillian.

"And is it not enough?" answered the prophetess.

"When shall I see him again?" asked Lillian.

"When you little expect it," said Hagar. And raising both hands above her head, she uttered these words, in a kind of solemn chant: "Return, return, O, Shulamite, return, return that we may look upon thee!" then vanished into the woods.

"Quite a dramatic performance, that last," observed Bettie, as she turned Methuselah's head homeward.

"Wasn't it impressive?" answered Lillian.

"And it was curious, too, her saying that he knew me, although I didn't know him. Of course I don't believe in fortune-telling; but taken in connection with our adventure this afternoon, it was a curious coincidence."

"O, that's the way the cat jumps," said Bettie, laughing.

(To be continued.)

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

CHAPTER II.

But a female seminary is not a prison, and Miss Tasker was not ubiquitous, hence it did occasionally happen that her pupils found themselves beyond the reach of her surveillance.

Once, in an evil hour, Miss Tasker consented that Lillian and her room-mate, Bettie Potts, should drive out in a certain old phaeton, belonging to the establishment,—a long, low vehicle, capable of maintaining its centre of gravity under the most adverse circumstances. The horse which drew it seemed to be coeval with the phaeton, if not with the institution itself. At all events, he had long since forgotten the frivolities of his colthood, and was as sedate and steady an animal as heart could desire,—even the heart of the preceptress of a young ladies' boarding-school. Altogether, an establishment less liable to accident or adventure could not well have been devised.

The route which Lillian and her companion chose was the romantic but secluded road which winds so gracefully along the margin of Goose Pond; Goose Pond was always a favorite resort of the seminary girls. Malignant persons said it derived its name from that circumstance.

And now, as our two young ladies took cognizance of the beauties of the scene,—the hum of insects, the twittering of birds, the lilies on the bosom of the water, the odor of the pines, and the sunlight as it stole through the boughs, making long, shimmering lines of light from shore to shore,—as they noted these things, they ceased to urge Methuselah beyond his natural gait, or much heeded if he paused to browse on the alders that grew by the wayside. But suddenly the stillness was broken by the short, sharp report of a rifle.

This was Methuselah's one weak point,—he hated fire-arms. Perhaps some ancestor of his had been killed in the war. Perhaps he himself had been frightened in his youth. I know not; but this I know,—he hated fire-arms, and the report of this rifle stirred him to the depths of his being.

He pricked up his ears; he shook his head wildly, snorted, and even showed signs of running away; but if he had any such intention, it was speedily frustrated, for a young man,—no other than the hunter himself,—sprang out of the woods and seized him by the bridle.

"Don't be alarmed, ladies,—don't jump out," cried he.

But his counsel came too late, for even as he spoke both of them alighted on the ground.

"I hope you're not hurt?" he said.

"I'm not," said Bettie, jumping into the phaeton quite as nimbly as she had jumped out a minute before.

"I—I believe I'm a little faint, that's all," said Lillian.

"Are you? Let me get you some water. I have a drinking-cup in my game-bag," said the young man.

"O, no, I shall soon be better," said Lillian, and suffered him to help her into the carriage.

"I'm very sorry for the accident. Of course I should not have fired if I had seen you," said the hunter.

"Luckily, there's no harm done; and we're much obliged to you for coming to our assistance," said Bettie, as she took the reins from his hand, and, touching up Methuselah, whose spirits seemed very much improved by the adventure, nodded the young man a smiling goodbye.

"O, what a courageous act!" exclaimed Lillian, who had by this time forgotten to be faint. "And you didn't thank him half enough. I think you were positively ungracious."

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

CHAPTER III.

One day, as Bettie sat at the table industriously translating her *Telemaque*, Lillian came in from a walk, and throwing her hat on the bed, said, in a low, mysterious voice,—

"Bettie, I've seen him!"

"Seen whom?" asked Bettie, looking bewildered.

"The young hunter."

"O, the life-preserver," said Bettie. "Where was he?"

"It was very queer,—just as the gipsy said,—when I least expected it."

"*Apropos* of the gipsy, did you know the whole tribe had been driven out of town because some of the men were caught robbing hen-roosts?" So Mercy Jones told me. Rather an ignominious fate for your propheticness, wasn't it? But then prophets have always had a hard time. And so you met the dear unknown?"

"Yes. I was coming out of the post-office, and in attempting to raise my sunshade,—it always goes hard, you know,—I dropped a letter. A gentleman picked it up and handed it to me. To my surprise it was he."

"Are you sure you didn't drop it on purpose?" asked Bettie.

"If you're going to talk so, I won't tell you any more," said Lillian, pettishly.

"Go on, do,—I'm dying to hear."

"Well, before he handed me the letter, he glanced at the superscription."

"Impertinent fellow!"

"Not at all. He recognized me, and wished to learn my name,—don't you see?"

"Then he couldn't be the one spoken of by Hagar the propheticness, because she said he knew you already."

"How absurd! You know I don't really care for what the old woman said."

"Um—well, what happened next?"

"I bowed and thanked him, and passed on."

"And was that all? I call that a most lame and impotent conclusion."

"No, that was not all. It was so pleasant I did not feel like coming straight home, so I came round by the pond, and before I got a quarter of a mile he overtook me."

"What, Lillian! You didn't speak to him, I hope?"

"How could I help it? It all came about naturally, you know. Hearing footsteps, of course I looked up, and he touched his hat; I smiled and nodded my head a little in return. I'm sure I couldn't do less, could I? Then he remarked it was a fine day, and I said it was. Then it was such a good opportunity, and we were so near the scene of our adventure, that I couldn't resist thanking him again for the service he had rendered us,—and he was so modest about it. 'It was not worth mentioning,' he said."

"He showed a gleam of sense there," put in Bettie.

"And from that we got to talking about other things," continued Lillian, too much interested in her own narration to notice the interruption; "and before we parted, I felt better acquainted with him than I should with some persons after knowing them a year."

"Well, certainly this is the most extraordinary performance I ever heard of. What do you think Miss Tasker would say if she knew you had been walking out with a strange man? Why, you don't even know his name."

"Beg your pardon, but I do. He was considerate enough to tell me his name,—Roger Ryan,—a foreigner by birth. He has just enough accent to be interesting; and he is spending the season in travelling. As to Miss Tasker, she'll know nothing about it, unless you are mean enough to tell her."

"O, I shan't turn informer,—you needn't be afraid of that; but if he follows you again, I advise you to cut him dead." So saying, Bettie returned to her translation.

Some fifteen minutes had elapsed, when Lillian awoke from a profound reverie, to observe,—

"Bettie, his eyes were hazel."

"Whose eyes?" asked the bewildered Bettie. "Telemaque's?"

"No. Roger's."

"Well, I'm glad that point is settled to your satisfaction. So now do come and help me get this poor fellow out of Tartarus. He's just gone down in search of his father, Ulysses, you know." (Reads aloud.) "*Le jeune fils d'Ulysse sentit son cœur emu*,"—in plain English, felt his heart jump,—"*tout son corps étoit couvert d'une sueur glacieuse*"—all his body was covered with a cold sweat. O, my,—wasn't he scared? Wonder what made him look for the old gentleman in that disreputable place."

Lillian, having drawn her chair to the table, was now listlessly turning over the leaves of her dictionary, and no further allusion was made to her eventful walk.

Not long afterwards, as she and Bettie, accompanied by several of their fellow-pupils and two of the subordinate teachers, were returning from weekly prayer-meeting, Lillian suddenly stopped, saying,—

"There, I forgot to get the blue sewing-silk to hem my veil with, when I was out to-day."

"Never mind," said Bettie; "you can hem it with ravelings."

"I hate ravelings, they break so easily," said Lillian.

"Get the silk to-morrow, then. What difference does it make? Come, we shall lose sight of the rest," said Bettie, putting her hand on Lillian's arm, and trying to draw her along. But Lillian held back.

"I want to get the silk to-night," said she. "I have very particular reasons for it, though I can't stop to explain them now. It won't take five minutes to run over to Miss Scrivener's shop, and by crossing the Common we can soon overtake the rest,—it makes it ever so much shorter, you know. Do go with me,—there's a dear good girl."

"O, well, if you've really set your heart on it, I will; but we must make haste."

It was only a few rods to the shop, but it took Lillian a long time to select the right shade of blue, and when at last it was fairly in her pocket, she began fingering the fancy articles on the counter, and asking their prices.

"Come, what's the use of bothering Miss Scrivener, when you don't want to buy anything? Besides, we shall never be able to overtake the rest, at this rate."

"No great harm if we don't," said Lillian, drawing on her gloves and buttoning them with provoking deliberation.

Having no further excuse for delay, she followed Bettie from the shop, and they were hurrying across the Common through the well-worn path by which the towns-people were wont to cut off the corner made by the junction of two roads, when Bettie grasped Lillian's arm, and said, in a low voice,—

"See,—there's a man standing under that tree!"

"Is there? Well, never mind; I don't believe he'll harm us."

"But what is he standing there for? I dare not pass him. Let's turn back,—let's run."

"Nonsense! I didn't think you were such a goose," said Lillian, with a little nervous laugh.

"Goose or not, I'm afraid of him. O, I wish we'd kept with the others."

"Bettie, the truth is, I know him," whispered Lillian.

"You know him?"

"Yes. It's he,—it's Roger!"

"What, that fellow who followed you from the post-office? Then I certainly will not pass him; he'll be sure to speak to us."

"O, Bettie, what will he think? He sees us, I know."

"No matter what he thinks."

But here the discussion was cut short by the approach of the young man himself. He did not ask leave to escort them, but with a simple "Good-evening," stationed himself at Lillian's side as if by mutual understanding, which Bettie began to suspect was in reality the case.

The conversation which ensued was of the most harmless character. It might have been proclaimed from the church-steeple without detriment to either party; but Bettie's indignation would not allow her to join in it by a single word. She walked on in resolute silence to the seminary-gate, when the mysterious unknown took his leave.

After all, they were but a few minutes later than their companions, and when Miss Bixby, one of the two subordinate teachers, who stood in the hall waiting for them, asked what had caused the delay, Lillian replied,—

"We just stepped into Miss Scrivener's to get some silk, which I wanted very much."

"Another time you'd do better to ask leave," said Miss Bixby.

"And another time you'd do better to walk behind, instead of heading the procession," thought Bettie; but she said nothing until they had reached their room. Then she turned upon Lillian with the indignant question,—

"Now will you please to tell me whether you planned that meeting to-night?"

"What if I did? I'm sure there was no impropriety in it."

"I must say you have very extraordinary ideas of propriety, then. Now I'm as ready for a lark as most girls; but when it comes to this kind of thing, I'll have nothing to do with it."

"You speak as though I'd done something dreadful."

"And so it is something dreadful. The man may be a thief or a blackleg, for anything you know to the contrary."

"I'm sure I admire your elegant language," said Lillian, sarcastically. "Well, you can go and tell Miss Tasker all about it if you want to, but there's one consolation,—you walked with him as much as I did."

"I've no idea of telling Miss Tasker; but the next time you make a clandestine appointment, don't draw me into it, or I will tell."

"I'm sure I don't see what makes you so cross and ill-natured to-night," said Lillian, almost in tears. "I'm sure I meant no harm."

(To be continued.)

drew forth from her pocket the precious letter,—for a letter it indeed was,—rose-scented, sealed with blue, and bearing a masculine name on the envelope.

She held it up to the light, she turned it over and over, as if to learn its contents by a kind of psychometric insight, but nothing more was revealed to her anxious scrutiny; and to break the seal transcended her authority. She therefore threw off her bonnet and shawl, and stepping softly across the hall, knocked at Miss Tasker's door.

"Enter!"

She opened the door. Miss Tasker was alone. "I have a communication to make to you, if you are at leisure," said she.

"Quite at leisure," said Miss Tasker.

"It may or may not be of importance, but of that it is for you to judge. I was coming into the yard a few moments ago, when I saw a person leave it by the side gate, and go to the old butternut tree. Apparently she deposited something in the hollow of the trunk. When she had returned to the house, I too went to the tree, and this is what I found there," presenting Miss Tasker the letter. "The person whom I saw was Miss Pope."

"A love affair, I fear," said Miss Tasker. "It is what I have all along looked for, you know."

And such are the intricacies of human nature that it is difficult to say whether the preceptress felt more sorrow at the delinquency, or more joy to find herself a true prophet.

Her fingers were on the seal; but if she meditated breaking it, she changed her mind. She knew that she was mistress of the situation, and there was therefore no need of being precipitate.

When puss has the mouse once in her claws, she can afford to dally with it a little before she devours it.

"Send the young lady to me," said she. "I will hear what she has to say. It is possible she may be able to explain the matter, suspicious as it looks."

When Lillian received the summons, she supposed that Miss Tasker wished to give directions about her studies, so she entered the room with her usual languid smile.

"Do you recognize this document?" asked Miss Tasker, holding the letter up for her inspection.

Lillian's smile vanished, and she made a motion as if she would have snatched the letter from Miss Tasker's hand.

"I see you do," said Miss Tasker. "Do you own to being the writer of this letter?"

Lillian's reply was a little nod, and a scarcely audible "Yes, madam."

"And this Mr. Roger Ryan," reading the superscription, "is an old acquaintance of yours,—a relative, perhaps?"

"Neither," said Lillian.

"But then no doubt he was introduced to you by some mutual friend able to vouch for his character?"

"We have no mutual friends," said Lillian, her courage beginning to come back; "but there are cases when the conventionalities of society are as nothing, and this is one of them. The first time I saw him, he saved my life."

"Saved your life?"

"Yes, madam. When Methuselah was madly dashing away with us—Bettie and me,—he sprang in front of him and saved our lives at the risk of his own."

"So Methuselah was running away with you?" said Miss Tasker, unable to repress a smile, notwithstanding the gravity of the occasion.

"Yes, madam," not observing the smile, or misinterpreting its cause. "O, you should have seen him,—mane and tail flying,—eyes glaring, I assure you I was near fainting. Of course it was but natural I should recognize my deliverer when I met him afterwards."

"Possibly. But I do not see the necessity of carrying on a correspondence,—a clandestine correspondence with him. Are you aware that by doing this you not only run the risk of being expelled from the seminary, but endanger your own good name?"

No answer.

"I am willing to believe that you are not aware of the magnitude of your indiscretion, to call it by no harsher name,—that you have been guilty of nothing worse than thoughtlessness. On this account,—and, I confess it, because I do not wish to bring scandal upon the seminary,—I will overlook the offence, provided it is never repeated. Will you give me your promise that you will have nothing more to do with this person—this Mr. Ryan, whoever he is?"

"I cannot promise that, for we are engaged to be married," said Lillian.

"Infatuated girl! This is worse than I

dreamed of. Does your father know any thing of the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Then unless you give me your word that the affair shall be dropped where it is, he shall know of it without delay."

"It will make no difference if he does, for I will never give up Roger,—no, never," said Lillian, firmly.

"Enough,—go to your room. And Miss Prince,"—to the assistant, who had remained a silent spectator of the interview,—*"see that Miss Pope does not leave the house till further orders. I knew she'd bring us into trouble,"* she continued, when Lillian had retired and shut the door.

"But who would have believed she could prove so stubborn?" said Miss Prince. "She seemed like one who might be swayed by the pressure of your finger."

"You may bend the young willow by the pressure of your finger," said Miss Tasker; "but remove your finger, and it springs back to its old place. She is like all her gens. Nevertheless, I think I can manage her."

Then Miss Tasker sat down at her desk, and wrote a letter to Mr. Pope, which she despatched by the evening mail.

It was promptly answered by the appearance of that gentleman himself.

(To be continued.)

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

CHAPTER IV.

From this time Bettie saw no more of the mysterious stranger, and although she once or twice asked in a careless way what had become of him, Lillian answered evasively and immediately changed the subject. So Bettie, who was not of a suspicious disposition, concluded that her room-mate was cured of her folly, and dismissed the matter from her mind.

Thus several weeks passed, when one evening as Miss Prince was hurrying homeward, her attention was attracted by a figure in white emerging from the seminary grounds through the small side-gate. Now this gate was seldom used except by the servants, and never by the pupils. Yet this was not a servant,—of that Miss Prince was positive,—so she advanced a few paces, and concealing herself in the shadow of the lilac hedge, waited to see what should happen next.

Near the hedge outside the grounds stood an old butternut tree, whose heart was hollow from too long experience of life's vicissitudes. Towards this tree the figure crept stealthily, hovered suspiciously over it a moment, then glided back through the gate, passing so close to Miss Prince that she might have touched her with her hand had she chosen, but she did not wish to precipitate the issue,—she had other plans in view.

By the faint light still glimmering in the west, she distinctly recognized the features of Lillian Pope.

"That means mischief," said she to herself.

But she did not move till Lillian had reached the house. Then she, too, stole out to the old tree. She peered into the decayed trunk, and—O, hollow heart, too ready to betray its trust!—saw a small white object lying in full relief against the dark wood.

She put in her hand, and drew forth—a letter!

Miss Prince was not a bad-hearted woman, nor did she bear any malice towards Lillian. On the contrary, as we have seen, she felt rather drawn towards her; but she had been ordered by her superior to watch this young lady, and she had done it faithfully and well, yet hitherto there had been nothing to reward her vigilance. It is not too much to say, therefore, that at this moment she experienced something of the joy which the baffled detective feels, when he comes upon a clue which may help him to work up his case.

Slipping the letter in her pocket, she went round to the large gate, walked quietly up the avenue, and although accosted by one or two of the pupils on the way to her room, she betrayed no trace of agitation. But once there, she locked her door, lighted her lamp, and eagerly

"Indeed, I'm *certain* it's emerald. It was an heirloom in the family. He told me as much," said Lillian.

"It's glass, I tell you. If it isn't glass I'll eat my head,—yes, I'll admit he's a *gentleman*, instead of the impostor I think him."

"I don't see why you should be so prejudiced against him, when you know nothing at all about him," said Lillian, pouting.

"But I mean to find out something about him. Somebody must know who he is,—and I'm going to the village to make inquiries."

"I don't care what anybody says. The more people abuse him, the more I'll stand by him. You're all in a conspiracy to ruin him and destroy my happiness."

"On the contrary, it is your happiness I have most at heart. I can have no interest in the matter separate from yours. But it is useless to talk any more about it now. You can go to your room, and by-and-by I hope you will see that you have done your old father injustice."

Lillian retired somewhat sulkily, and as she went up stairs was heard humming to herself these words:

"O, what was love made for, if 'tis not the same Through joy and through sorrow, through glory and shame?"

Mr. Pope's next step was to go to the village and make inquiries concerning his prospective son-in-law. He had no difficulty in learning all that he wished to know, for there were few persons there to whom the name of Roger Ryan was not quite familiar, although scarcely half-a-dozen persons at the seminary had ever heard of him. But this was not strange, for between the Haddamites and the seminary-ites there was very little intercourse. The inhabitants of two different spheres could scarcely have had less knowledge of each other's affairs.

Of course Mr. Pope did not disclose his reasons for inquiring about this young man, and as it was naturally inferred that they were of a business nature, no one had any hesitation in answering his questions freely.

He then returned to the seminary, and communicated to Miss Tasker all that he had learned, concluding with—

"But it is useless to tell this to my daughter."
"Quite useless, I should say," said Miss Tasker.

"Poor deluded child! She already fancies we are all in league against her, and to tell her the steps I have taken would but confirm her in that idea."

"Deluded, indeed," said Miss Tasker. And after a few moments of silent thought, added: "You do not doubt the truth of what you have heard?"

"Certainly not."

"But *she* will doubt it. In her present state of mind a word from him would outweigh the testimony of the world. I can think of but one way in which she might be cured of her infatuation."

"Pray what is that, madam?" said Mr. Pope, eager to grasp at any straw in this emergency.

"If you could but get him to tell you the truth in her hearing, she must inevitably be convinced; and if he does not tell the truth, you can confute him without difficulty."

"Admirable, madam. But how can we bring this about?"

"Easily, I think. Invite him to an interview here, in my parlor, and as your daughter's presence would naturally be embarrassing to all parties, if it did not upset our scheme altogether, I would have her stationed in the back parlor, where she can hear without being seen."

"Excellent, madam. I believe we have the game in our hands."

"I hope so, indeed, Mr. Pope; for I, too, have something at stake as well as yourself. Apart from my sympathy with you, and my interest in your daughter, I can but feel that it would be little to the credit of my school to have the affair get abroad, and I have sought to bring it to an end in the quietest way possible. Surely, a little diplomacy is pardonable in a case like this, if ever," said Miss Tasker, with a smile.

"I think we need have no scruples on that score," said Mr. Pope; "and I cannot sufficiently express my thanks for the relief you have afforded me. At what hour will the parlor be at my disposal?"

"To-morrow morning, at ten o'clock. Earlier than that the young ladies are at the piano. At that time, and after, I will see that you are subject to no interruption."

Mr. Pope then despatched a message to Mr. Ryan, requesting an interview on the following morning, to which request a ready assent was returned, the young man no doubt thinking it quite reasonable and natural that the father of Lillian should wish to make his acquaintance, under the circumstances.

The next morning, Mr. Pope said to his daughter,—

"I've got some news for you, my dear."

"Good news, I hope?" said Lillian.

"That's as you may take it. I expect a call from that young man, by-and-by."

"Not Roger, papa?" the color stealing over her cheek and hiding itself under her hair.

"Yes, Roger," said Mr. Pope, making a wry face, in spite of himself, at his daughter's familiar mention of the obnoxious name, as well as at being obliged to speak it himself. "He will be here by appointment at ten o'clock. As it is purely a business interview, your presence might be a little awkward for all of us; still I wish you to hear what is said, that you may be certain no injustice is done to him, and no deception practised upon you."

"You said that nothing others could say would have any weight with you, and you may be right; so I have decided that you shall hear his story from his own lips. For that purpose you may station yourself in the back parlor, while we occupy the front one. Then, if it turns out that he is a likely fellow, and you are satisfied with him, I promise to make no further opposition to your wishes. This is fair, isn't it?"

"Quite fair, papa; and I am glad you are going to have a talk with him, because it will satisfy *you*. As for me, I am satisfied now,—nothing could make me trust him more than I do."

(To be continued.)

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

CHAPTER V.

It was with some trepidation that Lillian entered the room where her father awaited her. But he was not the stern papa of the novel and drama. He neither stormed nor raved, but opened his arms in a very encouraging fashion, and she rushed into them and kissed him a dozen times, forgetful of every thing but that he was her father, and it was two long months since she had seen him.

Not until she had inquired for her mother, and the cat, and the chickens, and the flower-garden, and many other objects associated with home, was any allusion made to the errand on which Mr. Pope had come. Then he said, quite good-humoredly,—

"So you've been having a little love-affair,—hey? Come, my dear, let's hear about it. In the first place, who is this young fellow?"

"O, papa, he is *so* handsome,—*so* fascinating!" began Lillian.

"Tshaw! I mean where did he come from? What is his business? Who are his folks?"

"He's a foreigner, papa."

"A foreigner? That's definite. A Hindoo or a Hottentot?"

"O, now you're joking, papa. Of course he isn't either of those. In fact, I don't know to what nation he does belong; but he wasn't born in America, although he's been travelling in this country a number of years. He says when we are married I shall travel with him. Won't that be splendid? And, do you know, I shouldn't wonder if his father were a nobleman. He often speaks of him in connection with some great castle or other,—I forget the name."

"In short, you don't really know any thing at all about him, and it's my belief that he's an adventurer."

"I'm sure he's nothing of the kind; and it's cruel of you to talk so, papa," said Lillian, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

This act brought to Mr. Pope's notice a large, showy ring, which he had never seen his daughter wear before.

"Where did you get that trumpery?" he asked.

"The ring? *He* gave it to me. Isn't it a beauty?" said Lillian, changing from tears to smiles with wonderful facility.

"There's a good deal of it, to say the least," said Mr. Pope. "Of course you gave him something in return? That is the usual style, I believe."

"Y-e-s," said Lillian, hesitatingly, and in a low voice; "of course it was an exchange."

"And the ring you gave him was"—

"My diamond."

"Your Aunt Thankful's gift. I thought as much. I missed it from your finger. Well, it's a good exchange—for *him*."

"But I assure you, papa, this ring is almost if not quite as valuable as the diamond. See,—it is an emerald of uncommon size."

"It's glass, my dear,—nothing but glass," said Mr. Pope.

Lillian then seated herself in a recess in the back parlor, and in due time Mr. Ryan appeared. Divested of all romantic surroundings, and seen by unprejudiced eyes, he was an ordinary-looking young man enough, with reddish hair and a sheepish expression of countenance.

When the usual courtesies had been exchanged, and both men were seated, Mr. Pope began,—

"I suppose you can guess the business on which I have sent for you, so I will come to the point at once. I understand you have made proposals of marriage to my daughter. I must say, by the way, it would have been more honorable if you had consulted me before you got quite so far as that."

"I suppose it would, sir," said Mr. Ryan; "but that wasn't any of my doings. I didn't care a groat who knew what was going on, but she was always for keeping things secret. I thought there was some reason why you wasn't to be told."

"Well, let that pass; but since you wish to become my son-in-law, I suppose you have no objection to telling me something of your position and circumstances?"

"None at all."

"You are, I understand, a foreigner by birth. Of what country, may I ask?"

"Ireland, sir."

"Good country. You've no reason to be ashamed of it, especially as you come from the higher ranks."

"I wish I did," said Ryan, smiling; "but I and all my kin are from the peasantry."

"But did you not give my daughter to understand that your father was a nobleman?"

"Not I, faith,—I'd scorn to sail under false colors."

"But did you never say anything about a castle with which he was in some way connected?"

"Bourraddie Castle,—so I did. You see, sir, there were extensive bogs connected with Bourraddie, where my father was employed to dig peat."

"Ah, yes, I see. But though of humble origin, you are well off in this world's goods, I believe?"

"I must own that money always had a way of slipping out of my pocket a good deal easier than it went in," said Ryan. "As the other fellow said, 'I was born with nothing, and I've held my own pretty well ever since.'"

"How is it, then, that you are able to spend so much of your time travelling? It requires money to travel."

"I make it pay, though. The fact is, I'm a travelling merchant,—or, as some would call it, a peddler."

"But did you not promise my daughter she should travel with you after marriage?"

"I did; and I meant she should, sir, as I do,—on the cart. The truth is, she was kind of soft and romantic, and never called things just by their right names, so I talked that way to please her."

"I suppose it was on that principle that you called the glass ring you gave her an emerald,—the one you exchanged for the diamond I see on your finger?"

"How's that, sir?"
"Because she's a mere child, and my consent was never asked. However, I don't wish to have any hard feelings about the matter; so if you'll give her up quietly, I'm willing to make you a fair compensation for your disappointment."

"But how about the young lady, sir? Would he be willing to give me up? She always seemed uncommonly fond of me, and it wouldn't be just the square thing to go back on her now."

"Your scruples do you honor," said Mr. Pope; "but I think I can answer for my daughter."

"Well, then, if she don't object, I'm willing to make terms with you, rather than have any trouble about it."

During the foregoing conversation, slight shrieks and exclamations might have been heard from the back parlor, which were lost on one party because he lacked the key to interpret them, and which the other did not choose to notice.

Now, before Mr. Pope could make any reply to Ryan, Lillian herself appeared in the doorway.

"I object!" cried she. "I'm only too glad to be rid of you! Take back your ring, and keep it for the next girl who is fool enough to fancy herself in love with you. All I ask of you is to go out of my sight, and never let me see you again,—never! A peddler,—O! And an Irishman!"

And having thus given vent to her feelings, Lillian fled to the sanctuary of her own room.

"St. Peter! Who'd have thought of her taking it so?" ejaculated Ryan, as he stooped to pick up the ring she had thrown at his feet. "Why, I didn't think the girl had so much pluck. She always seemed as soft as beeswax. But there's no accounting for the ladies," with a facetious smile. Then taking the diamond from his finger, he handed it to Mr. Pope, saying,—

"Here's her ring. It's no more'n fair she should have that back again. Give it to her with my—my—respects, sir; for I do respect her, and always shall, though she did give me my walking-ticket without much ceremony, just now."

"And with regard to the little business arrangement of which we were speaking," said Mr. Pope, slipping the ring into his pocket, "you have already expressed your willingness to accept a compensation for your disappointment. Will you name some way in which I can serve you, either by money or influence?"

Ryan reflected a moment.

"Well, sir, if it wouldn't be asking too much, maybe you'd be willing to help set me up in business for myself."

"What kind of business, for instance?"

"O, the same I'm following now, sir. There's nothing else I should like so well. It's pleasant to see new places—new faces. No, I've no wish to give up the old cart; but you see I've been selling on commission. Now if I owned the whole thing, it would just be the height of my ambition, sir."

"Then I'll help you buy up the concern, with all my heart," said Mr. Pope. And Ryan having named the sum which he deemed adequate for the purpose, he filled out a check for the amount on the spot.

to her that mattered little which. On the other hand, there was the disapproval of her teachers,—implied rather than expressed,—for Miss Tasker was a judicious woman, and preferred that the tale should point its own moral; but altogether Lillian felt like one under a ban.

She went about looking downcast and dejected, not to say a trifle sulky; she neglected her studies, and would have rejected her food, only that her appetite was so remarkably good.

"Come, now, what's the use of putting on such a long face about it?" said Bettie Potts. "I'm sure you ought to be thankful that you got rid of the man as you did. Suppose you'd married him before you found him out, and been obliged to ride round on a peddler's cart all your life?"

But this well-meant consolation failed of its effect on account of the allusion to the peddler's cart, which was a barbed arrow to Lillian's soul.

"I'm sure you have the faculty of saying very disagreeable things under the guise of friendship," said she. "You'll all be sorry you've treated me so when I'm gone."

"Gone where?"

"You'll know when it's too late," said Lillian, significantly, and with a plaintive sigh.

It was not the first time she had given utterance to mysterious threats of this kind; but Bettie had never attached any importance to them, and did not now. That her room-mate was seriously contemplating putting an end to her trials by terminating her existence did not once occur to her. Yet such was the fact. Lillian thought that in this way only could she turn ridicule into sympathy,—perchance admiration,—and wring the hearts of her persecutors with a late repentance.

It was not long since she had read in the newspapers an account of the suicide of a young lady in a neighboring town. She had done something wrong or foolish before her death, but no one seemed to blame her for it afterwards,—they only pitied her sad fate. And so no doubt it would be with her, she declared to herself. Even the thought that she, too, would figure in the papers, had consolation in it.

She considered the comparative merits of the various modes of exit,—by steel, by bullet, by poison, by water,—and decided upon the latter; for was not Goose Pond handy, and drowning pleasant?—while as to dramatic effect there was no comparison.

Having fully matured her plans, she lost no time in carrying them into execution. One moonlight night, when Bettie was sleeping soundly, she rose from her couch and made her preparations for the final tragedy.

First she wrote a short note, stating that she was about to bid farewell to a treacherous and ungrateful world,—that she freely forgave her schoolmates and friends all their unkindness to her, and begged them to think tenderly of her when she should be no more. "When you read this, I shall be sleeping beneath the peaceful waters." Such was the closing sentence.

Signed—"One weary of life."

Having pinned this note to her pillow, she put on a fresh white muslin frock, loosened her long hair and shook it down over her shoulders, then wrapped herself in a large gray shawl, the better to elude observation, and thus arrayed stole

And there we will leave her for the present, although it is a sorry plight in which to leave any human being.

When Bettie Potts awoke the next morning and missed Lillian from her side, she supposed she must have overslept herself, for early rising was by no means one of Lillian's chief virtues, so she arose hastily and began to dress, looking at her watch she saw that it still lacked some minutes of the time for the bell.

"Well, that's odd," said she. "What new freak is this?" and proceeded with her toilet in a more leisurely way.

When it was completed, she opened the window, flung back the blinds, and put her head out to sniff the fresh air. Having done this to her satisfaction, and exchanged compliments with an old black cat which was sitting on the fence, sniffing the air also, she drew her head in again. Then for the first time she saw the note fastened to Lillian's pillow.

She was so much accustomed to her room-mate's vagaries, that it was with a feeling of curiosity, rather than suspicion or alarm, that she unpinned and opened it; but no sooner had she glanced at the contents, than she darted from her chamber, and ran with breathless haste to Miss Tasker's room, uttering little shrieks as she went, which brought a score of half-dressed young ladies to the hall, all of whom joined in the shrieks, although they did not understand the cause. In short a panic was imminent when Miss Tasker's stately form appeared at the door.

"Silence!" said she, sternly; and every voice was hushed.

"Now tell me what this means,"—to Bettie, who was foremost of the group.

"Lillian has drowned herself. There's the note," said Bettie, with a hysterical sob.

Miss Tasker read the note, and her cheeks grew a shade paler.

"Go to your rooms. I will see to this. I trust it is a false alarm," said she, in a softer tone, and with a slight tremor in her voice.

The girls retreated, clinging to each other, speaking only in low, frightened whispers.

Miss Tasker then caused the house to be searched, and inquiries to be made among the servants whether anything unusual had been observed below stairs; but nothing was brought to light excepting the fact that a kitchen-maid had found the back door unfastened in the morning.

This testimony confirmed Miss Tasker's worst fears concerning Lillian, but the instinct of self-preservation was strong within her. Not would she abandon her seminary to the carping tongues of the outside world. She quietly dispatched Jackson, her gardener and factotum, to the pond to see if perchance there were marks or footprints in the soft soil, or other traces of recent disturbance. He returned in less than twenty minutes, with a gray shawl on his arm, which he had found not far from the water.

"Do you know this shawl?" asked Miss Tasker, showing it to Bettie Potts.

"Yes, madam, it is Lillian's."

Of course further concealment was impossible.

(Concluded next week.)

For the Companion.

A BOARDING-SCHOOL ROMANCE.

By Ruth Chesterfield.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS.—CHAP. VII.

"Call out the townspeople," said Miss Tasker. "Make thorough search,—let the pond be dragged if necessary."

Jackson obeyed her orders with such effect that half the male population of the village were soon assembled on the margin of the pond. They went to work with a will; but although every expedient known to science or to experience was resorted to, it was all in vain.

Once, in dragging the pond, a heavy weight was felt approaching the surface, and all bent forward with solemn faces and bated breath, expecting to behold the form of the missing girl. It was only a slimy, decaying log, the home of a thousand slimy things.

"It isn't worth while to land that fish," said one; and loosening the grappling-irons, they suffered it to slip back into the water, perhaps to be seen no more by the eye of man forever.

The little cannon—the hero of many a Fourth of July celebration—was fired across the pond, and its echoes reverberated through the woods and across the hills, announcing to many a listening ear that the search was still going on. Every report summoned relays of small boys to the scene, till it seemed as if all the schools in Haddam had broken loose,—and not Haddam only, but all the adjoining towns,—but this was the sole result it produced. The sun rose to its noonday height and sunk to its setting, but still the body was not found.

"It has probably got entangled in the rushes," said the village doctor; "in that case it will never come to the surface again."

"Now it appears to me more likely it's been swept away by the current," said the blacksmith, a stalwart man in shirt-sleeves, who had flung down his hammer and come to the rescue at the first alarm. "I shouldn't wonder if they found it down to the mill-dam in course of a week."

"No, that couldn't be," said a small man in spectacles, who passed for a philosopher. "The outlet isn't deep enough to float it."

"Deep enough!" said the blacksmith, indignantly; "it would float an ox."

While these and similar speculations were indulged in, a man was seen coming through the woods waving a handkerchief.

"You needn't look any longer,—I've found her," shouted he, as soon as he was near enough to be heard.

All gathered eagerly round him, each one who had advanced a theory hoping to have it confirmed, and the man, who was a farmer named Boyd, went on,—

"You see I heard the news when I was on my way to market this morning, and when I come back to-night my wife she said the body hadn't been found. 'Well,' says I, 'I'll go down and help 'em soon's I've fed the critters and eat my supper.' So I went out to the barn and put up the horses, and wheeled the wagon under cover, and chored round a spell, and then I took up my pitchfork to pull down some hay; but just as I was going to stick it into the haymow, I see something white crouching down in one corner of the loft."

"Now I ain't what you call a superstitious man,—don't believe in ghosts nor nothing of that kind,—but I must say it made me feel sort o' queer and all-overish. I was bound to see what it was, though, and had got one foot on the rung of the ladder, when my wife come to the door and called out that supper was ready. I beckoned to her and she come in."

"'Look there,' says I, pointing to the loft."

"She got up on tip-toe, and looked a minute, and then burst out,—

"'My stars, Caleb,—it's that ar seminary gal!' And sure enough it was!"

"Dead?" from the bystanders.

"No, alive; but most starved, and chilled to the bone. We got her down off of the loft and into the house, but not a word could we get out of her for a while; but my wife she made her some hot tea, and coddled her up one way and another, and bime-by she found her tongue."

"Aye, they most generally will as long as the breath of life is in 'em," said the blacksmith. "Trust a woman for that," said the philosopher.

"As I was saying," continued Mr. Boyd, "she told us then how't she'd come down to the pond to drown herself, but her courage failed her, and she was ashamed to go back to the seminary, so she hid in my barn. She said she hadn't made up her mind what to do next."

"A disappointment in love, wasn't it?"

"She didn't say as to that, though my wife surmised it. What she did say was that she was 'tired of life.' My patience,—a young creeper like that tired of life! Well, I sent my boy up to the seminary with a message to the preceptress, and she come right down herself in a carriage,—she and another one—her assistant, my wife said it was,—and took her away with them."

"You ought to have seen her when she bid my wife good-by. You'd a thought by the way she hugged and kissed her that they'd known one another all their lives. My wife couldn't help crying,—she's a terrible tender-hearted woman,—and when the carriage drove off she says, says she, 'Poor little soul,—I hope they won't be harsh with her up there!' And I'm sure I hope so, too."

"Well, I don't see as we are wanted here any longer," said the blacksmith, perceiving that Mr. Boyd had got to the end of his story; "so I'll go back and finish shoeing Peyton's horse. A pretty trick the girl's played on us, though, keeping us overhauling this old pond all day for nothing."

"You mean to say you'd have been better satisfied if you'd fished her out of the bottom," said the doctor,—a remark which caused a good-humored laugh, in which the blacksmith joined as heartily as any one.

"All's well that ends well," observed the philosopher.

"Wouldn't 'Much ado about nothing' be more appropriate?" said the doctor. And with another laugh the crowd began to disperse, dragging the little cannon with them, while a shouting mob of juveniles brought up the rear.

In a short time the woods were deserted, and Goose Pond lay silent and lonely under the rising moon.

Lillian, meanwhile, had alighted from the carriage and made her way to her room, under a masked battery of curious eyes,—as draggle-tailed, disconsolate-looking a heroine as could well be conceived. Her white dress hung limp and stained about her ankles; her hair fell in tangled masses over her shoulders, while a gaudy shawl and indescribable head-covering, borrowed from good Mrs. Boyd, added grotesqueness to the disorder they were designed to conceal.

If Lillian's aim had been dramatic effect, she had certainly succeeded beyond her most sanguine expectations, though not precisely in the way she had intended.

When Bettie Potts saw this odd figure entering the room, she hardly knew whether to laugh or cry, so she did both; while Lillian, throwing off her outside wrappings, sunk upon the bed she had so lately quitted with fell intent, utterly exhausted.

For a long time she lay so still that Bettie thought her asleep; but she was not asleep, for as Bettie stood watching her, thinking how pale and worn she looked, she suddenly opened her eyes,—those large blue eyes, soft and limpid as a child's,—and fixing them on Bettie's face, said,—

"O, Bettie, what a fool I have made of myself!—haven't I?"

"Yes, dear; but not half so big a fool as if you had really drowned yourself," said Bettie.

"You don't know how horrible it all was," continued Lillian. "I can never forget it. I don't believe I shall ever be so silly again as I have been."

"I hope not, dear; but never mind that now. The first thing to be done is to change your clothes and brush out your hair. You'll see what a nice dressing-maid I can be when I choose."

"There, you look quite respectable," said Bettie, when she had made good her vaunt. "Now go to sleep, and don't wake up till to-morrow morning. By that time I dare say things will look brighter." And kissing her room-mate, Bettie shaded the lamp, and sat quietly down to her studies.

When Mr. Pope heard of his daughter's latest escapade, he naturally supposed that her course at the seminary was finished,—that nothing remained but for her to graduate with such laurels as she had already won. He therefore came at once to take her home with him.

"Papa, I do not wish to go home," replied Lillian, when she had listened to what he had to say.

"Not wish to go home?" repeated he, in surprise.

"No, papa; I want to stay and retrieve my character."

"You will meet with much that is unpleasant, I fear. Have you considered that?"

"Yes, papa, I know all about it; but if Miss Tasker is willing, I would rather stay."

"By all means let her stay," said Miss Tasker, when this was communicated to her. "The wish to do so is a most hopeful sign. As the immortal Confucius has said, 'Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.'"

And, supported by two such authorities as Miss Tasker and Confucius, may we not take leave of our heroine with a reasonable hope that her future may redeem the past,—that even her follies may prove stepping-stones to higher things?"

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.